



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL IN THE CLASSROOM

BY **FREDERIC STANLEY DUNN**
University of Oregon

Never voluntarily would I seek the office of advocate for either prosecution or defense, much less that of judge or juror, in the arraignment of the historical novel. My own convictions would prove too curious a contradiction, now condoning, but again condemning; my sentence of one day would all too likely be repealed the next. At times, I have thrust aside a would-be historical tale with profound disgust, yet subsequently to revel with complete satisfaction in a masterful and faithful piece of fiction. The types are manifestly too varied, too elusive, to admit of a sweeping predicate in either vindication or disparagement, for the very element to be deplored in one will be a matter of congratulation under another's hand. It is true, historical fiction has not even reformed its palpable faults of long ago—its maturity is in great part charged with the same old errors of its youth. But we may as well be resigned, for, though long since convicted of grave sins, the classical novel has many commendable merits in palliation, and will doubtless remain in unruffled indifference before the bar of literary criticism.

As an instructor in the classics, I must confess to have reaped not merely genuine enjoyment but decided profit from historical fiction. An early hobby of mine, of which I am still a willing devotee, was a systematic reading of novels based upon classic themes. And, that I might secure a real benefit from such a course, I persisted in attacking them, not in haphazard fashion, but in strictly chronological order, even beginning with those that were founded on prehistoric life, such as Jack London's *Before Adam*, or Stanley Waterloo's *The Story of Ab*; then continuing the thread of story down through biblical, Graeco-Roman, and early mediaeval times, establishing, for sobriety's sake, a very fixed *terminus ad quem* with the Norman conquest of England. How much I have owed to this panoramic illumination of history, this veritable "moving picture exhibition," I shall never be able adequately to express.

The Persian Invasion under Xerxes was as vivid as yesterday's rainbow under the fascinating lead of William Davis' *A Victor of Salamis*. Athens' confused record under the Misrule of the Thirty, despite all the Attic orators and historians, became somewhat intelligible to me after Charles K. Gaines's *Gorgo* fell into my hands. The horrors of the Mercenary War will always remain a nightmare to me since reading Flaubert's *Salammbô*. Rome's struggle with Spartacus and the gladiators became intensely real to me under the spell of Eckstein's *Prusias*. Walter S. Cramp's *Psyche* was like a flashlight thrown upon the *Annals* of Tacitus—it seemed to me that I had not hitherto understood many scenes in the narrative of those dark days under Tiberius. I have no hesitation in avowing that even the juveniles of Alfred J. Church and George Henty, with all their very evident defects, have added no little zest to my appreciation of classic history.

Occasionally I have ventured to read in the classroom brief selections from representative classic novels and have never failed to receive from my most mature students a gracious acknowledgment of clearer vision and increased stimulus in the subject which chanced to be under discussion. For example, one of my classes, working on the Latin of the Decadence, became, all incidentally, involved in some confusion over the manner of Pompeius' death, as suggested by Martial's *Epigrams* v.69 and 74. At our next meeting, in addition to the discussion of the *loci classici*, I took occasion also to read in illustration from Davis' *A Friend of Caesar*—the second part of chap. xxii, which he entitles "The End of the Magnus," wherein the tragedy is well portrayed. The classic authorities and their modern rendition were a very successful combination.

A class in Cicero's *Cato Maior* once became interested in the study of the ancient oracle. I recalled the scenes in Gilkes's *Kallistratus*, in which the chicanery of the oracle on the Rhone was most admirably illustrated. Eckstein's *The Chaldaean Magician*, the tale of "An Adventure in Rome in the Reign of the Emperor Diocletian," would, of course, have been too long to read during a single period. But no learned article in any *Realencyclopädie* could have so animated the subject for that class as did those few

pages from *Kallistratus*, where the Gallic chieftain consults the oracle as to the expediency of espousing the cause of Hannibal or of remaining faithful to Rome.

I well remember the surprise and interest of an advanced class in the teaching of high-school Latin, on my reading to them, without first telling them the source, the first two chapters of Arnold's *Phra the Phoenician*, in which the hero's first experience in his shifting life of metempsychosis is to find himself arrayed with the Britons against Caesar's attacking squadron and subsequently to die beneath the sacrificial adze of the Druidic priests.

Similarly, Pliny's two Letters to Tacitus, narrating the eruption of Vesuvius, suggested the few pages of climax from Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*. These are but illustrations of how the classical novel may be taught to yield its best influence educationally. I should recommend, however, that the employment of this practice be rather cautiously and judiciously timed, for too frequent indulgence in it would unquestionably result in dissipation on the part of both instructor and student.

But the very errors of the historical novel have proved a most fertile text for example and correction in the classroom. The inaccuracies in dates, the mistakes in spelling, the anachronisms, the mistranslations, the warped interpretations—all these are a perfect quarry for exercises *in corrigendis*. At times, I have cited passages from various novels, directing my classes to detect and correct such errors as were evident. A "quizz" could very successfully take such a form.

The gross misappropriation of Roman names in fiction is something appalling. I had long ago capitalized the error of Shakespeare in his tragedy of *Julius Caesar*—an error that has itself become a classic—in giving to Decimus Brutus the *nomen* "Decius" in lieu of the *praenomen*. The reduplication of *praenomina* in "Caius Lucius," commander of the Roman forces in the drama of *Cymbeline*, was also known to me. The list of *dramatis personae* in Addison's *Cato* had frequently been called to the attention of my classes—the two sons, Portius and Marcus, dividing between them the father's *nomen* and *praenomen* respectively; the daughter, a Marcia instead of Portia; and a senator denoted by the lonely

praenomen Lucius. As the feminine *praenomen* was rather infrequent, the name Lucia, which Addison gives to the senator's daughter, is also worthy of comment.

But I soon learned that the classical novels, both good and bad, were full of erroneous usage in Roman nomenclature. In Elizabeth Miller's *Saul of Tarsus* will be found a scene where the paying teller of a bank is waiting upon a line of customers. Presently he is confronted by a personage applying for a loan, who presents "as an indorsement the favor of Caesar and the *family name of Aulus*." In fact, one of the predominant features running through a host of novels is the overwhelming emphasis laid upon the *praenomen* independently of the other names, forcing it to do duty for the *nomen* and *cognomen*. Marcus and Lucius are the decided favorites and very markedly overworked. *Marcus the Centurion*, the title of a novel of Caesar's time by G. Mannville Fenn; "the Senator Lucius," a character in Gardenhire's *Lux Crucis, a Tale of the Great Apostle*; "the Prefect Publius," the latter in Irving Bacheller's *Virgilius, a Tale of the Coming of Christ*; these are almost as nonsensical as it would be today to call men formally by the given name.

Another abuse of the *praenomen* is its reduplication, as already witnessed from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. An instance of this is to be found in Sienkiewicz's *Let Us Follow Him*, a story of the time of Christ, where the very first words are the name "Caius Septimus Cinna." Septimus, after the analogy of Sextus and Decimus, has not classical confirmation.

The multiplication of *nomina*, the first apparently serving the purpose of the *praenomen*, is also a common ruse. While even inordinate accretions of *nomina* became prevalent under the late empire, its instances were too rare during the times of the republic and early principate to warrant such general use made of it in novels based upon early classic periods. Ingraham, in *The Prince of the House of David*, introduces a centurion, "Aemilius Tullius." Henty, in *The Young Carthaginian, a Story of the Times of Hannibal*, has a prominent personage under the name "Julius Marcus."

The greatest blunders, however, occur in the names assigned to women. Few writers of Roman tales seem to have known the

principle that the women of the Republic were quite generally designated by the *inherited nomen*. On the contrary, all sorts of *nomina* are conferred upon the women by heedless authors. Duffield Osborn, on p. 139 of *The Lion's Brood*, makes T. Manlius Torquatus, in the times of the Second Punic War, thus account for his daughter's name: "She is truly Manlia, though called, against custom, for my dead Marcius." Emma Leslie, in *Glaucia, the Greek Slave*, has a "Sempronius Gracchus," in Nero's reign, whose two daughters are respectively "Valeria" and "Claudia." Henty, again, in *The Young Carthaginian*, calls the wife of the Consul Ti. Gracchus by the title "the Lady Flavia Gracchus," somewhat after the modern fashion, while their daughter is styled "Julia."

It has been a source of amusement to note the various appellations given to Pilate's wife in the large group of novels based upon the life of Christ. Some of the writers were apparently ignorant that the Greek church had canonized this "Proselyte of the Gate" under the legendary name of Claudia Procula. Each story taken up in its turn seemed to add a new name to the list. In *The Prince of the House of David*, she is styled "Lucia Metella." In Opie Read's *The Son of the Swordmaker*, she is "Procla," a substantiated form in syncopation. In Henderson's *Diomedes the Centurion*—I may add, in passing, that this last-named volume fairly bristles with all sorts of errors—the name becomes "Clauda"—this also a parallel form. Mark Ashton, in *She Stands Alone*, has the legendary combination, "Claudia Procula." As for Pilate's daughter—if he had one—Mrs. Florence Kingsley, in *Tor, a Street-Boy of Jerusalem*, calls her "Felicia." A little drama by the Very Rev. F. Felix, names her more properly "Pontia," though the same writer countenances still another variant in the mother's name, "Claudia Proclea."

Fictitious names awkwardly derived, or names that may be well enough substantiated but ethnologically misplaced, are especially odious. Malcolm Dearborn, for instance, in his *Bethsaida*, also a story of Christ's time, seems to have tried his ingenuity in manufacturing possibilities. The wife of a "Petronius" is named "Loris," and their son has the Greek name "Aristarchus." "Lionia" and "Delila" appear as Roman matrons in the story. Gar-

denhire's *Lux Crucis* has such names as "Secor Diventus," "Fabyan Amici," "Brabano," and "Paulo," some of which seem to presage the modern Italian.

Anachronisms in the use of well-authenticated proper names, betraying strange lapses in historical accuracy, are particularly startling. An instance may be quoted from *The Young Carthaginian*—"Clotilde," a Gallic girl, and "Brunhilda," chieftainess of the Orcan tribe, are premonitions of the Frankish invasion, still six centuries in the future. The author of *Lux Crucis*, too, perpetrates an anachronism in creating a so-called Briton with the Anglo-Saxon name of "Ethelred"—this in the times of Nero. But, to make the situation still more an impossibility, this Briton is made to hail from Brittany. This last is not the very flagrant confusion of Britain with the French Bretagne, but it is the error of making a Briton come from Bretagne thus early in history, for, in Nero's reign, this section of Gaul was doubtless still known as Armorica, while Brittany, with its immigration of Britons, did not become a historical fact until at least six centuries subsequently. Wholly unconscious of his blurred historical vision, Mr. Gardenhire interpolates this bit of conversation on p. 118. The Senator Lucius remarks to Ethelred:

"In my younger days, I have marched over all Brittany and crossed the channel to the island beyond. Hast been there?"

"To Angle-land of the crooked shores and chalk cliffs?" replied Ethelred, with a smile.

Think of it—Angle-land in the days of Nero! It is we that smile. And, *mirabile dictu*, here in the novel called *Bethsaida*, already noted, is a fisherman named "Nilson," bringing Norraway, the "Ultima Thule," into the Rome of Augustus.

But it is the student in Roman topography who will probably find the classical novel his easiest prey. The crudest errors have been committed in blissful ignorance that there could be any possibility of mistake. The welcome introduction of archaeology into our college curricula has resulted in unfolding a world of knowledge as to things Roman, things which the last generation of writers never suspected. Some citations from *Lux Crucis*, the same tale of Nero's time, will illustrate the *errata* which ignorance of topog-

raphy must needs entail. The author repeatedly makes use of the expression "the Pincius," a designation which the Collis Hortorum did not receive until perhaps quite late in the empire. His application of the mediaeval term Mamertine to the Carcer Tullianum is an error of the same type. On p. 198 is the amazing statement, "He . . . drove back *through the Forum of Trajan*"—this in a story of Nero, thirty-three years before the accession of Trajan. A similar anachronism is this on p. 217, "As he turned from the Via Augusta *into the Forum Pacis*," though this misses the synchronism by the mere matter of ten years. Several times, the expression, "Septimianian (*sic*) Way" is used—incorrect not only in word-formation but especially in chronology, for Septimius Severus, after whom only could a Via Septimiana be named, did not reign until nearly the close of the second century. Again, on p. 254, someone says, "We can spend an hour there and stop by at the wine-shop *near the Severus Arch*," and on the opposite page is a reference to the "Aelius Bridge." It would be a relief to be able to assign some of these blunders to faulty *typography* rather than *topography*, as perhaps this on p. 84: "I became a slave of *Tulla Antonus*, who lived in the *Forum Boriam*," or on p. 285, where the term "Velabrium" is to be found. But the evidence is too overwhelming that the author, while doubtless consulting a map of Rome in good faith, apparently never once surmised that that map was a composite, including also the Rome of the late empire. The Forum Pacis might thus escape him, but it is unaccountable how the names Trajan and Septimius Severus at least did not instantly suggest subsequent epochs in history. The repeated use, too, of the term "Transtibertine" looks clumsy beside the accepted Transtiberine, a comely twin for "Septimianian."

It seems almost like desecration to discover similar errors lurking amid the chaste diction and the chaster ethics of Walter Pater, yet even *Marius the Epicurean* fell a victim to geographical inaccuracy. Near the close of chap. x is this statement: "It was dark before they reached the Flaminian Gate"—this in the times of Marcus Aurelius. Again, in chap. xxv, we find the phrase, "among the low hills on the bank of the Tiber, beyond the Aurelian Gate," still antedating the Aurelian Wall by many generations.

Even the profound scholarship of Henryk Sienkiewicz was not impregnable against topographical confusion. In perhaps all other respects, *Quo Vadis* is painfully accurate, but when the author presumes to describe the Great Fire of Nero and essays minute geographical references, he betrays his limitation. The progress of the narrative seems to indicate that Sienkiewicz spread a map of Rome before him and implicitly copied the proper names as he pushed his finger along the circuit of the Aurelian Wall. This same confusion of the fourth-century wall with the earlier limits of the city has worked disaster with a number of writers. It forced *Quo Vadis* to bear witness to a multitude of grievous blunders. The Portae Flaminia, Salaria, Nomentana, Appia, Ostiensis, Portuensis, and Septimiana are all severally mentioned as if in existence in Nero's time. As some of these gates involved new roads, the reference to several *viae* too are faulty. For instance, the Via Portuensis, which he repeatedly mentions, may have been an ancient road following the north bank of the river, but it certainly was not the "Harbor Road" until after Trajan began his operations for a new outlet for the Tiber and a new harbor at its mouth. Two references are made to the prehistoric Porta Mugionis of the old Palatine City, as if pertaining to the present city. Finally, the Horti Domitiae are called the "Gardens of Domitian."

Yet at times Sienkiewicz reveals a familiarity with the history of the city's development and seems cognizant of the difference between the Neronian Rome and that of Probus and Honorius. For instance, at the opening of chap. xx is the sentence, "They went through the Vicus Patricius, along the Viminal to the former Viminal Gate, near the plain on which Diocletian afterward built splendid baths"; and again, in chap. xliii, we read, "Besides, the bridge at the Porta Trigenia (*sic*), opposite the Temple of Bona Dea, did not exist yet."

Occasionally a writer exhibits an almost ludicrous inconsistency. M. A. Quinton, the learned author of *The Money God*, a story of Diocletian's time, whose erudition is apparent at every turn, passes immediately from a reference to "the Capena Gate, which terminates the Appian Way," to a paragraph in which he brings his hero across the Tiber to "the great Aurelian Way, ending at the

Aurelian Gate." The Porta Capena and the Porta Aurelia were in two distinct systems of wall. If the so-called Aurelian Wall is to be presumed as now in existence in Diocletian's time, then the Capena Gate as the terminus of the extra-mural portion of the Appian Way is quite out of place, for this gate, as we know, was its terminus in terms of the old Servian Wall.

Citations of errors from numerous volumes could be multiplied *ad infinitum*, but I am unable to resist quoting a few more characteristic ones. Among the curious assertions made by the author of *Diomedes the Centurion* is this, that Nero was called Ahenobarbus because of his "bronze beard." It is true, Nero did have at one time a disproportionately famous "bronze beard," but so also, probably, had a long line of Ahenobarbi before him.

In Church's *The Count of the Saxon Shore*, a letter is introduced into the body of the narrative, purporting to come from "Flavius Honorius Augustus to the faithful and valiant Lucius Aelius," and with the following subscription, "Given at Ravenna, the twelfth day before the Kalends of August, in the year of our Lord 408, and the fifteenth year of our reign." The problem here presented is, not the reduction of "a.d.XII.Kal. Aug." (I came near writing "Sex." for this last) to modern terminology, but the realization that "Anno Domini" was still a matter of the future—in fact, it was over a century before Dionysius Exiguus even proposed the instituting of a new chronology, to say nothing of its general adoption by Christendom, which was not until several centuries afterward.

I am convinced that the author of *The Money God* must have been guilty only of grammatical ambiguity in the appended passage, but it is profoundly sensational on the surface. The paragraph in question—and with this I shall close—occurs near the beginning of chap. xvi of Part I and reads, "In confirmation of this" (the cruelty of the Emperors) "is the example of Tarquin the Proud, who, taking the envoys of his son into the garden, cut down the tallest flowers, but took no notice of the low and insignificant ones; thus intimating that humble citizens (unless they were Christians, by whom he always believed himself menaced) caused him no uneasiness, and that he attacked, in Rome, only those whose stature towered above the multitude."